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PROGRAM Crossfire

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SUBJECT Espionage

ANNOUNCER: On the left, Tom Braden. On the right, Herb London (?). In the crossfire, former government official and FBI agent G. Gordon Liddy; and C. Philip Lichty (?), a former CIA agent.

TOM BRADEN: The first man is Chief Warrant Officer John Walker, Jr., U.S. Navy (Retired), accused by the FBI of spying for the Soviet Union for the last 15 years. The second man, he is Michael Walker, Seaman, U.S. Navy, who is John Walker's 22-year-old son. He delivered to his father a bag of secret documents from the U.S. carrier Nimitz, destined eventually for the Soviet Union. And the third man, Arthur Walker, the Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy (Retired), brother of John and uncle of Michael, who, says the FBI, has been delivering secrets to the Soviet Union since 1980.

Why? What makes an American turn on his country? And what can Americans do to foil Americans who are traitors?

HERB LONDON: John Walker, as you quite rightly point out, has been providing the Soviets, or is accused of providing the Soviets with secrets for 18 years. If his estranged wife had not blown the whistle, it's conceivable that he would have -- the Soviets would have received secrets for another 18 years.

What is wrong with our security system that provides for this kind of lapse?

C. PHILIP LICHTY: I think there are some very big differences between our security systems in civilian intelligence -- in other words, CIA -- and the military side. And I know our impression while I was working for the Agency was that security

in the military services is almost nonexistent.

So, I'm not sure that we have much of a system to talk about there. It's quite understandable, to me, how something like this could go on for many years undiscovered.

BRADEN: Mr. Lichty, earlier you told one of our reporters that talked to you on the telephone that you thought this thing might have been just released right now because the defense bill was going through Congress or because the President was having a rough time in recent months. Do you think that this is made up for the benefit of the American people so that we can all rally behind the President and say, "Oh-oh. There are Soviet spies"?

LICHTY: I don't think the case is made up, but I think its importance is largely embellished. At any give time, the FBI has dozens of these cases that they're following quietly along. The reason that they're not immediately prosecuted, or rolled up, as we say, is that they simply aren't important. And they're saved for some politically opportune time when the President's in trouble, needs a diversion, and...

LONDON: Mr. Liddy, what do you think of this kind of comment?

G. GORDON LIDDY: Well, I would disagree with it. It is true that some of these cases are not prosecuted immediately. They might indeed try to turn the Walkers and provide disinformation to the Soviets which would capitalize on the Soviets having recruited them. We don't know why in this instance they did not. Perhaps because, as has been alleged, the chief instigator, former Warrant Officer Walker, has a grievance against the Navy, quote, hates the Navy, unquote, that would not be possible. I don't know.

LONDON: But isn't it interesting that a man like Walker will say that he is pleased to be a celebrity, now that he has revealed this kind of secrets? What does that suggest about the motivation of some of these people who are providing the Soviet Union with information?

LIDDY: Well, I doubt that he was motivated in becoming a spy by the possibility of celebrity, being caught. I don't think he ever intended to be caught. And as we understand now, he would not have been caught but for his former wife having walked in the door of the FBI and said, "Guess what? My former husband is a spy."

I think he did it, if we can believe what we're told, one, because he's a disgruntled former employee of the Navy, and,

two, because of the sums of money that he was receiving. In terms of his income, they would be substantial. And so you have, in addition to a grievance, you have venality.

BRADEN: Well now, look, Mr. Liddy, I've been thinking about this. We've got money. And I find it very difficult to believe that you can get any honest, upright, God-fearing American to sell secrets to the Soviet Union because somebody hands him 12 or 25 thousand dollars.

LIDDY: I agree with you completely. An honest, upright American wouldn't do it. I don't think we're dealing with an honest, upright American.

BRADEN: Well, here's a guy who's been in the Navy for 20 years.

LIDDY: I agree it is a shocking thing. And indeed, my eldest son will be commissioned on the 21st of June in the Navy.

LONDON: What I think is being overlooked, however, is something that's more important. There are eternal factors. If Christopher Boyce can testify before our Senate and say -- this is the Falcon in Falcon and the Snowman -- and suggest that what is really wrong is that no one takes espionage particularly seriously, that it's seen as a James Bond escapade. Well, if it's seen as a James Bond escapade, you get the kind of result what we have with the Walkers.

LIDDY: Well, if you have a situation where a prominent American actress goes over to a country where we were at war, sits on an antiaircraft battery and cheers when a U.S. plane is shot down, and nothing happens, can you blame them for having an attitude like that?

I blame them, yes. But I mean we have an atmosphere here that was totally different than in World War II. Imagine if Betty Grable had gone over and sat on a German flak battery in Berlin in the middle of World War II what would have happened to her.

BRADEN: Now look, Mr. London, we've got two guests here that have both -- that have been in trouble, in a certain sense. A G. Gordon Liddy was certainly in trouble. And Mr. Lichty was in trouble for a while with the CIA. Now, I want to bring those matters up because they bear on the question of who is to know what's good for the national security.

Gordon Liddy, you did what you thought was right when you broke into the Watergate. You -- nevertheless, when you did so you violated the laws of the United States. And then you went

to prison and you stuck it out, many people thought bravely, and many others thought wrongly.

LIDDY: Sure. The Washington Post wanted me to tell all.

BRADEN: But tell me, what gives you the right to say, "Look, this is okay for the national security, even though I'm breaking the law"?

LIDDY: First of all, I did not go into the Watergate for national security. Watergate had absolutely nothing to do with national security. It had everything to do with political espionage.

I went into Dr. Fielding's office out in Beverly Hills, the psychiatrist for Daniel Ellsberg, in the interests of national security. And there, in my opinion at the time, in my opinion to this day, the opinions of John Sirica to the contrary notwithstanding, it was a genuine national security matter.

Watergate, I grant you. But I had never contended that Watergate was...

BRADEN: Here's my point, here's my point, and this is what I'm trying to get at. For all we know -- I don't know this man. Neither do you, I presume. These naval people, an officer, a warrant officer, and seaman, who turned on their country. What gave them the right to say, "It's okay for me to do this"?

LIDDY: No one that I know of has suggested that they have the right, nor that they said that they had the right. They simply sold out their country. That sort of thing has been going on for a long, long time. The first list of spies you'll find anywhere in the world is right in the Bible.

BRADEN: One more question. I just want to ask you this. When you decided to break into the Watergate, you knew that you were violating the law, and yet you did it. I'm just wondering what sort of mentality it is that makes a fellow say, "I'm going to do this," violate the law.

LIDDY: Well, what you're [unintelligible] is breaking into the Watergate with selling secrets to the Russians. I suggest to you...

BRADEN: They're not the same, I agree. They're both violations of law.

LIDDY: They were both violations of the law. And the last time you went over 55 miles an hour out on the thruway you also violated the law.

BRADEN: That's a little different, too.

Now let me turn to you, Mr. Lichty. You got in trouble with the CIA because, as I understand it -- correct me if I'm wrong -- you told the fact, and it was a fact, that certain U.S. Congressmen were being bribed in South Korea. Or paid.

LICHTY: Yeah. I would like to have told that. The fact was that we were aware of Koreagate for several years before it was revealed. And what CIA was doing was covering up the information for the Congressmen, without the Congressmen knowing this, because, as my superiors told me, they were afraid that if this was done, if this was revealed, eventually the Congressmen would retaliate against the Agency through the Bureau of the Budget.

BRADEN: Yeah, but...

LICHTY: And rather than national security, it was money that was involved.

BRADEN: But you broke the rules of the CIA because you thought that it was wise to put this information out, despite the fact that it was against the rule. Is that right?

LICHTY: Well, no, that's not right. Because what I tried to do was for four or five years I fought this case quietly through the system, within the Agency, saying that, "Look, let's not have this made public. Let's clean up our own dirty linen before someone else does."

BRADEN: All I'm saying is, or what I'm trying to get at, Mr. London -- and maybe I didn't get at it -- was that these fellows in the Navy are -- these fellows in the Navy knew they were breaking the law, and something went in their heads that said, "It's all right for me to do this."

LONDON: Let me just tell you what I think you're doing wrong. And that is, you're using national security as a pejorative, the way in which many people on the left often talk about national security, as if it's an excuse for the maintenance of security measures.

Now, there are indeed certain security measures that have to be maintained in this country.

BRADEN: I'm doing nothing of the kind, Mr. London. I'm saying that these people violated the law and that something in their heads told them it was all right. Otherwise they wouldn't have done it.

LONDON: Well, they may have done it for the money.

We're not entirely sure about the motives. And they may have done it because our country has become so casual about the way in which national security is discussed that almost anything is excusable. As Mr. Liddy points out...

LIDDY: I would just like to point out the basic fallacy of Mr. Braden's argument. Now, your typical professional bank robber, when he goes in and sticks up the First National Bank, knows he's breaking the law, but he doesn't think it's all right. That's how he's making his living at the moment.

A spy doesn't think it's all right unless he has been recruited for ideological reasons. There is no indication here that any of these three were recruited for ideological reasons. They did it, we understand -- whether correctly or not, I don't know -- one, by virtue of a grudge against the Navy, the classic disgruntled former employee; and second, for money, venality. And that's all there is to it. There's no great philosophical point to be made here.

BRADEN: Yeah, but something tells the guy that it's all right for me to do this. Maybe it's money...

LIDDY: The bank robber doesn't think it's all right for him to do it. He knows that if he's caught he will go to jail. He knows it isn't, quote, all right. But he does it anyway.

LICHTY: There's something else going on here regarding the motivation, I think. And I've seen it, I've felt it myself in the 15 years that I worked for CIA. Overclassification and proliferation of paper is just a way of life within the military services and within the intelligence community. And what happens is that everything and anything is classified at least secret. And I'm sure that naval officers are no different than CIA officers. After a while, it all is just meaningless. And it's so easy to begin giving away documents by the pound, or by the hundred pounds as in the case of the Walkers, because they don't seem to be very important. And in fact, most of them aren't very important.

BRADEN: Well, when we get back, gentlemen, let's turn our attention to how this could have been permitted to have happened, why there is not -- why these Walker people had top secret security clearance, why nobody apparently ever gave them a polygraph.

We're talking about the in-family, so far, spy ring which has just been revealed as having been engaged in the U.S. Navy for the last maybe 15 to 18 years.

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BRADEN: We're talking about the family spy ring that has been delivering secrets to the Russians, the FBI says, for 15 years. And our guests are two men well versed in security; Philip Lichty, a former agent of the CIA; and the famous G. Gordon Liddy, formerly of the FBI.

Mr. Liddy, did you think the FBI is doing a good job? And why -- and tell me, would the FBI be handling security in the Navy, or would the Navy handle that itself?

LIDDY: The Navy would handle its own internal security. If you have an incident of espionage such as you have here, the FBI would investigate because that's in its investigative jurisdiction.

To answer your first question, are they doing a good job? No. Not because they don't have still amongst them superb personnel, but because they are being poorly led by Director Webster.

BRADEN: Is that right?

LIDDY: Yes.

BRADEN: What's the matter with Judge Webster?

LIDDY: Well, there's one of the things. He will not even permit himself to be called Director. "Call me Judge." I wish he were a judge and not the Director of the FBI.

He is not imposing any discipline whatsoever internally on the FBI...

LONDON: Mr. Liddy, excuse me for interrupting. Do you think that's the issue? Or is it a case of having so many controls on the FBI and spy activities in the United States and intelligence activities in this country that it is not possible to really conduct this properly?

LIDDY: Well, there is also the fact that there used to be a whole domestic intelligence division in the FBI, which was wiped out. The FBI at one time would have ongoing investigations trying to find things out, trying to find these people before 18 years passed, and not being a reactive organization. Right now the FBI reacts. Somebody walks in, says so-and-so's a spy, and they react.

There was a time when they had their tendrils out all over the place. They were doing a very, very good job. Unfortunately, those of the liberal persuasion in this country became very upset with them. They gained the political power to be able

to demolish that ability of the FBI. And so they no longer have it.

BRADEN: Well, but wait a minute...

LIDDY: Still, they could do a better job with what they have if they were better led.

BRADEN: It seems to me Mr. London has a point. You've got four million, as I understand it, security clearances alive and well in the United States today, people who have these top secret security clearances. Who's going to manage all that?

LIDDY: There was a time when the FBI did the investigations for the Atomic Energy Commission and things of that sort. The services, the armed forces always did their own. There are millions of persons in the armed services, and the FBI lacks the manpower to do it. And the CIA lacks both the mandate and the manpower to do it.

BRADEN: Mr. Lichty, what do you think of that? You've had your security clearance. I presume you've had your polygraph.

LICHTY: Yes.

BRADEN: Do you feel that security in the CIA is good?

LICHTY: Oh, it's just about nil. It's probably almost as bad, in some ways, as the military services. It's a little bit better.

But in my early days with the Agency, back in the '60s, I started out in the clearance process, processing these. And the volume is just incredible. And because of the volume and the proliferation of classified information in general, there's no real way that the FBI or anyone else can keep up with it.

So, the clearance -- the fact that someone has a clearance is almost insignificant.

BRADEN: Well then, let me ask you both. What's the answer? If we've got four million security clearances in the United States, we have something like 22,000 investigations going on every year...

LIDDY: I'll tell you what the answer is. In the old days of Hoover's FBI, you had the Bureau indices. If someone was proposed for a position of trust and confidence with the government where he would have access to classified information, they'd run him through the indices. In those days, the FBI got a

tremendous amount of information to put into those indices. That whole spigot has been shut off.

LONDON: Well, I think the problem, as you quite rightly point out, is the difference between civil liberties and the maintenance of security in this country. The security-freedom equation, I think, is very much out of balance, and it's entirely in the direction of civil liberties and very much away from security. And that accounts in large part for why there are these leaks.

Now, I think one of the things that has to be corrected and one of the things that must be analyzed is the degree to which you can maintain civil liberties and at the same time maintain the national security.

LIDDY: There's always going to be a tension between the two, and it's a prudential judgment every time.

LONDON: Well, every single time it is a prudential judgment. However, if you have films like "Another Country" and if you have plays like "A Pack of Lies," which create the impression that this is a very casual -- after all, it's only espionage. It's not something terribly much to worry about. Then it's quite understandable that you'll get the kind of response that we have had to many instances of leaks: Well, it's just one of those things that happens.

BRADEN: Philip Lichty, have you formed an opinion on how much the United States was damaged by this Walker case?

LICHTY: Yes. It's a little bit difficult to tell until we have all the information out. But at this point it appears to me that this case is pretty much like the other military espionage cases that have surfaced in the last 10 or 15 years, and that most of the information that has come out is what we referred to in the intelligence business as chicken feed. After all, the good stuff is locked up in the Admiral's safe or the CIA Director's or a small office in the FBI. And the really good stuff isn't available to some seaman in his early twenties...

LONDON: Wait a second. How do you know that this is chicken feed? How do you know that the information provided by the Walkers is chicken feed?

LICHTY: Because it was doled out to the Russians in hundred pound lots. And the whole good information that the U.S. Government has isn't available in hundred pound lots.

BRADEN: What do you say to that, Gordon Liddy?

LONDON: Well, maybe it simply provides a seamless web

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of where Soviet submarines are located.

LICHTY: The quickest way to jam the Russian system is to simply give them truckloads of information. That's the -- you can't process it. You can't deal with it.

LIDDY: You have a jigsaw puzzle here. Now, through various collection means, such as reading particular kinds of magazines and things like that, they can get little bits and pieces. It may be, and there is indications that it is, that this might give them the whole picture of our ability to track and locate Soviet submersibles.

Now, remember, it is not hard to destroy a submarine. You throw a nuclear device anywhere within a hundred miles of it and it will crush it. So it's very, very important to be able to know where it is and when it is there. Now, how we go about that and how the Soviets go about that is a matter of espionage between the two countries. If our system has now been compromised to the extent that the Soviets can now take evasive action, then there has been serious damage.

BRADEN: That would be my judgment, on the basis of what I have read, though I don't know.

But now let me ask you both the same question. What would you do to protect U.S. security?

LIDDY: I would (A) fire William Webster as Director of the FBI; (B) reestablish the Domestic Intelligence Division of the FBI; (C) revise the training that has been degraded at Quantico under Mr. Webster's administration. And I'm concentrating on the FBI because that's what I know. I don't know the CIA to the extent that Mr. Lichty does or that you do, as a former CIA officer, yourself

LONDON: The question that you still have to address is, how do national attitudes in this country change so that the CIA and the FBI can engage in their work properly?

LIDDY: Well, I think national attitudes are starting to change.

BRADEN: Okay. Well, let me just ask Mr. Lichty that one final question.

What would you do? Would you do anything about the U.S. Navy or the CIA?

LICHTY: Well, I'm with Gordon. First of all, I'd fire the Directors and Deputy Directors of both the CIA and the FBI.

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And I would stop overusing the term national security, only use it when it can be truly and accurately used.

BRADEN: All right, Mr. Lichty and Mr. Gordon Liddy. Thanks for being our guests on Crossfire tonight.

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BRADEN: Herb, I'm beat. I can't figure out why anybody would sell the secrets of this country. But I am convinced that both of these gentlemen are right, that we ought to tighten up security.

LONDON: A nation with no secrets cannot survive. A nation with too many secrets cannot survive as a democracy. It seems to me that the problem today is that we have a hemorrhage of secrets. We've got to close the hemorrhage and provide for the security of this nation.

BRADEN: And maybe Lichty is right, not have so many secrets. That rubber stamp can be overused.